

Florida Department of Environmental Protection spokeswoman Dee Ann Miller responds to TCPalm's questions about the state's new water issues website:
ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov

This website is a huge step forward. For the first time ever, we are consolidating data and information from multiple sources and putting it in one place to communicate the most relevant information to the public, which was informed initially by stakeholder research. It is true that SFWMD and other partners sample at more sites, but there is a process to get that data uploaded and there is a balance between having the most up-to-date data and having data from sites that are regularly sampled. We intend to provide as much information that we can that is also meaningful to the public. We appreciate the feedback and input and will continue to improve the website. This is only the first phase of the website and is one step of many to come.

The sites reflected on the map are sentinel stations in the 3 featured water bodies. These stations were chosen because they are sampled frequently and reported to DEP's Watershed Information Monitoring Network (WIN) and were actively sampled in 2019 for all three parameters of interest (nitrogen, phosphorus, and chlorophyll a). DEP and the water management district are committed to ensuring that the data reported on the website is an accurate representation of water quality and additional sites will be added as necessary to meet that goal.

While we appreciate your constructive criticism, the website is functional, and to our knowledge is not experiencing any problems. It accurately describes the data represented. I encourage you to read through the information on the website about the different data reported. The overview page transparently describes how information is displayed and the frequency with which data is updated on the website. The specific date that each sample was taken is clearly indicated on each marker.

Because blue-green algae and red tide is a clear concern of citizens, every effort possible is being taken to readily report and display this information when harmful algal blooms are present and toxic. The red tide and blue-green algae data is updated daily.

Nutrient data monitoring and reporting schedules are more variable, with sampling frequency ranging from annually to weekly, depending on the site. We would be happy to schedule some time with you to discuss our sampling protocols and reporting of this data.

Just today, the South Florida Water Management District committed to improving their process to increase their reporting frequency of nutrient data to monthly.

We are committed to continuous improvement, transparency and accountability. As more citizens use the site and more feedback is received, we will enhance the site to provide the information our citizens need to feel protected and reassured that we are committed to water quality improvement.